

DETAILED ACTION

Allowable Subject Matter

1. **Claims 20-21, 23-24, 28-29 and 35 are allowed.**

EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT

2. An examiner's amendment to the record appears below. Should the changes and/or additions be unacceptable to applicant, an amendment may be filed as provided by 37 CFR 1.312. To ensure consideration of such an amendment, it **MUST** be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee.

Delete the current abstract and replace it with the following:

-- This invention is a material discharge apparatus for controlling the flow rate of flowable material being conveyed through a hopper, the apparatus includes a hopper with an inlet at the top to receive flowable material and a discharge outlet at the base of the hopper, a valve configured and arranged in the hopper, the valve has a lower end portion adjacent the discharge outlet forming a gap between the hopper and the valve for material discharge, with the valve fixedly connected to a fixed support beam, the hopper elastically connected to the same fixed support beam such that as the more material is received by the inlet, the more the hopper sags, the larger the gap formed between the valve and the hopper grows, thereby increasing the rate of flow of material discharge.--.

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to ANDREW P. BAINBRIDGE whose telephone number is

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(571)270-3767. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday to Thursday, 9:30 AM to 8:30 PM EST.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Kevin Shaver can be reached on 571-272-4720. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/A. P. B./
Examiner, Art Unit 3754

/Kevin P. Shaver/
Supervisory Patent Examiner, Art
Unit 3754